

# Utilities receives perfect scores in City safety audit

## *Expanded program includes other departments in training*

The Department of Utilities swept the gold in the yearly safety audit conducted by the City's Safety and Health Office. This is the fifth year Utilities has captured top honors in the audit, the second year the department has been given the gold status in all areas, and the first year that all Utilities divisions and bureaus received perfect scores of 120.

Every year the City evaluates the safety program of each department, determining the effectiveness of the departments' safety and health programs and their compliance with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations.

Utilities racked up four perfect scores of 120, earning the gold status for Combined Operations, Moores Bridges Water Treatment Plant/Western Branch, 37th Street Water Treatment Plant, and Administration (Granby Municipal Building).

"Each department was first audited for its safety programs and records, then underwent site inspections," said Utilities Safety Manager John Tokarz.

According to Tokarz, a division could conceivably receive a perfect score in the programs and records audit (what he calls a "paper safety program"), then lose points if the field inspection showed safety hazards or violations.



John Tokarz conducts regular safety training meetings in all divisions of the Department of Utilities.

us at work and shows the respect we have for our jobs and each other."

The Utilities divisions were perfect on both counts and received four of the nine perfect scores given to departments in the City.

"An excellent safety program shows that Utilities truly values its greatest resource — its employees," said Utilities Director Kristen Lentz. "An effective safety program protects

Tokarz attributes the success of the department's safety program to the hard work of the employees and the support of management. That teamwork has enabled the department's award-winning safety program to expand and improve over the years.



**Members of Utilities' divisional safety committees show off their gold awards.** (Lt. to rt.) John Tokarz, Utilities Safety Manager, Steve White (Moores Bridges), Dennis Hairston (Utilities Operations Center), Tanya Blowe (Granby Municipal Building), Kristen Lentz, Utilities Director. **Not pictured:** Gerry Julian (37th St. Water Treatment Plant).

The department's emphasis on training is key to the success of the safety program, Tokarz continues. Safety training is one of the cornerstones of Utilities.

OSHA mandates that employers must survey the workplace, identify potential hazards and establish a safety program. Essential to this process is the establishment of an effective training program that enlightens workers of known hazards in

their work place and protective measures necessary to perform work tasks safely. The Utilities program not only complies with, but often exceeds, federal, state and local regulations.

Mandatory department-wide training is conducted monthly on major safety concerns including chainsaw safety, electrical safety, fire safety and work zone safety. Many courses are taught by expert trainers with costs waived as a result of partnering with professional safety organizations and governmental agencies. Safety training has also been an important part of the Utility Safety fair, which has expanded into a city-wide event. Its safety programs and demonstrations are now available to all departments.

This shared knowledge ensures overall city compliance with safety regulations, reduces potential liability exposure, strengthens teamwork and improves productivity.

"Ours is a successful safety program," said Ms. Lentz, "because it protects our employees, ensures the safety of our citizens, reduces costs, and reinforces a positive image for the City." ♦



Mike Purdy of Stihl Corporation is the primary presenter in the yearly Chainsaw Safety Training class.